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# BENEDICTINE LEAVES

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES  
ON THE WORK AND AIMS OF THE  
ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT

BY

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*“Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy Master, and incline the ear of thy heart and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by the toil of obedience thou mayest return to Him from whom by the sloth of disobedience thou hast gone away.”*

*Prologue of Holy Rule*



## Religious Life, What it is


 ANY years ago a noble layman lamented over the fact that he found Catholics who could not name from memory the then reigning abbots of the European Benedictine monasteries. I believe that I can say in truth that if this zealous layman lived today he would not find a great many among the laity who have even a well defined conception of the Benedictine Order in its Rule and ideals, its history, its work in the field of education, its care of the poor and its charitable institutions. In order to give a little enlightenment on these subjects, I have decided to preach a series of sermons on "St. Benedict and his Order." I have been especially influenced in the selection of this series through consideration that the Rule and ideals of St. Benedict are a concrete model for that reformation, or rather perfect restoration, of Christian life, which in the intention of the Church is the purpose of Lent. That it may be easier to follow this series, I shall preface it with an explanation of religious life in general, without reference to any particular order.

In casting about for words to explain wherein the essence of religious life consists, I turn to the

Gospel where the young man asks the Saviour: "What must I do in order to be saved?" You know the answer, "Keep the commandments," and you also know that upon the young man's assurance that he had kept these from the days of his youth he received the counsel: "If thou wilt be perfect, — sell (leave) all thou hast and come follow me." Here we have the essence of life in a religious order, THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, the perfect Man.

In order to make this following of Christ possible all religious orders bind their members by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to a lawful superior. Many orders bind themselves by special vows to the performance of certain specific work, as for instance the care of the sick, the foreign missions, the poor, etc.; but these we will not consider here since we are dealing with religious life in general.

By the vow of POVERTY the religious severs himself from all the encumbrances which earthly goods entail. Restricting himself to what is necessary for lodging, clothing and nourishment he lays aside all solicitude for temporal affairs. Christ says of this voluntary poverty: "Every one that hath left house or brethren, or father, or mother, or lands for my name's sake, and for the Gospel shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." Christ himself practiced voluntary poverty all his life. The whole world was his. His were the treasures of gold, and all the diamonds and precious stones he called his own. The whole world, aye the very powers of nature, were his. Man, the king of creation, was his creature and still he chose to be born in a stable, from parents who could not afford to pay rent exacted for a room. Follow him from Bethlehem to Golgotha and you will find him loving

poverty, calling the poor his own and making his abode with them. Poor shepherds were the first to greet him, and poor fishermen were chosen his apostles. He extolled the value of poverty when he remarked, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall see God."

By the vow of CHASTITY the religious obliges himself to lead, in a sinful body, an angelic life, a life of innocence and sanctity such as the angels lead in the sight of God, and as the Godman led when upon earth. A life upon which the Saviour pronounced so many eulogiums when upon earth, and the practice of which has been so eminently recommended by the apostles. By the vow of chastity every part of the body, the eyes, the ears, the hands and feet, the tongue are dedicated to the undivided service of God. Holy virginity is so pleasing to God that his only begotten, wishing to assume human nature, chose for himself a virgin mother and selected as his special friend a virgin disciple. He promised to reward with his ineffable vision the clean of heart when he said: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." Truly the religious enjoy the special friendship of him whom the angels adore, for of them it is written that "they follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth," and again "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men," and again in another place, "I will give them an everlasting home which shall never perish." Christ sanctified the married state by instituting the Sacrament of Matrimony, but he loved the life of virginity more and led this himself.

By the vow of OBEDIENCE the religious turns over to the service of God his entire self, the very faculties of his mind and body. To obey

God in the person of a superior, what a splendid oblation in the sight of God and heaven, what a guarantee that our lot shall be cast with the choirs of angels who obey his every wish. Voluntary obedience is the greatest oblation man can make. When we fast, give alms, practise austerities or bring any kind of sacrifice we give only part, and even here we frequently seek our own gratification, but when we sacrifice our own will, we give all. Obedience in a religious order is an entire and unreserved immolation of oneself to God. By the vow of poverty the religious offers external goods, by the vow of chastity he sacrifices corporeal pleasures, but by the vow of obedience he offers his inner self, his will with all its inclinations, the entire being. More no man can give. Surely this must be pleasing to God. To the religious may be applied the words of holy scripture: "In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will. . . . O my God I have desired it and thy law is in the midst of my heart," and again of the obedient man Christ says: "An obedient man shall speak of victory."

How much is the religious, under the vow of obedience, like to his divine Master, whose every word and deed and thought was formulated according to the will of his heavenly Father! Ask the Saviour why he fasted, why he prayed, why he went about and preached, why he worked miracles, why he finally allowed the wicked mob to deride and scourge and crucify him, and his answer is that obedience to his heavenly Father demanded it. Ask the God-Man why he did not, by his almighty power, change Golgotha into Tabor and he will answer again that he preferred to lose his life rather than lose the reward of obedience. How well does it again appear that the life of a religious is the following of Christ, the perfect Man.

All mankind must keep the commandments. A child must obey its parents, the employee must obey his employer in all matters pertaining to their contract, the wife owes obedience to her husband. The most humiliating obedience is frequently rendered for the sake of a little gain. To the laity God has indeed promised that it should be well with them if they observed the fourth commandment, but to the obedient religious God has promised that they should sit in judgment over the tribes of Israel.

All must observe the sixth and ninth commandments. All, whether young or old, married or single, must be chaste in thought, word and deed, according to their state of life. Moreover it is a teaching of the Church, based upon the words of the Apostle, that the state of virginity in the world, when observed out of motives of love for God and out of zeal for paying greater attention to the sanctification of their lives is more pleasing to God than the married state, but only to those who have vowed chastity can we apply in their most perfect sense the words that they shall "follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth".

As to poverty, experience teaches that a great many are by force of circumstances compelled to bear the burdens of poverty. They should do so with resignation, remembering that the poor man was upon his death carried to the bosom of Abraham by the very angels of God, but that the rich man was buried in hell. The rich can endear themselves to God by making proper disposition of their God-given riches, by assisting the poor and suffering and by supporting the various causes of religion and charity. But when the voluntary observance of poverty has been promised to God, and when even the possibility of acquiring riches has been denied oneself, surely such a life must be pleasing in the eyes of the Father above.



Some have said that the idea of religious life is antiquated, that the Church can get along without religious, or at most that religious orders belong to the outskirts of civilization. Let us examine whether they be right. It was the founder of the Church himself, the God-Man Christ, who gave us the example of religious life; he recommended it and promised it the highest rewards. It is a question of changing the teachings of the Saviour or maintaining the necessity of religious orders till the end of time.

The Church needs religious orders and has at all times called upon them as the prime source of her strength. History shows that the status of the Church in any country could at all times be judged by the status of her religious orders. Where they flourished in the spirit of observance and in membership, you may be sure that there Catholicism also flourished, and that a country's Catholicism declined as its monasticism declined. It was the religious orders of the Middle Ages that formed these ages into Ages of Faith. O what lessons does history teach in regard to the necessity of religious orders in the field of charity, education, the missions, the work of civilizing and sanctifying!

The enemies of the Church realize the importance of religious orders, and for this reason they work so hard for their extermination. The devil realizes it and for this reason has his agents at work against them. It is a case where the army of hell is in arms against the advance guard of Christ crucified. No matter what efforts the enemy may make, and even if they bring with them the very devils from out of the depths of hell, they shall never overpower monasticism because it is an integral part of that Church to which Christ has promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her".



The Church must prove her divinity by the fruits she produces. There must at all times be such among her members as strive after that greatest perfection which her founder counseled. To call Catholicism the work of God and to deny that there must be among its members such as are ready to leave all — relatives, friends, earthly goods for the sake of their God, would be approaching blasphemy. It would moreover be unnatural to have no religious orders in the Church. Even among heathen nations we find a form of monastic life. It is but natural that in every community that strives after right living there should be some who would deny themselves even legitimate pleasure in order to ennoble themselves the more perfectly to attain their ideal. In the Catholic Church it is at least an indirect denial of the efficacy of divine grace to deny the necessity of religious orders.

Individual souls require the existence of religious orders. Who would deny that religious life is necessary for him who has tasted of the bitterness of human life, has seen the vanity of all things mundane, and is anxious to flee from the world and its allurements, to seek the balm and spiritual comfort of monastic seclusion. Some have sinned grievously, and their strong desire of making reparation in a life of penance impels them to seek cloistral separation from the world. Judgment day will reveal the myriad souls who found happiness and salvation within monastic walls; judgment day will also tell how their days in purgatory were abbreviated by their penitential life in religion. But these are not the only souls for whom monastic life is necessary. No, the monastery is the gathering place for the purest and best souls, who from the beginning have kept unstained their baptismal innocence and who, im-

pelled by unstained love of God, have dedicated themselves without reservation to the service of the God they love. They are souls who would flee, like the dove, to those secluded spots where the love of God is truly to be found, where the angels of God chant their melodies, where the noise and hurry and distractions and temptations of the world do not penetrate, where earth is converted into a heavenly paradise. There are souls who cannot be happy amid the noise of the world, souls over whose cradle have been written the words, "whoever does not leave father and mother and follow me is not worthy of me," tender, beautiful, immaculate souls, who need a place of refuge from the world where they can serve God alone.

Monasticism is not an institution for the past, but is a necessity for both, the present and the future, as it was a necessity for the past. Are not the hearts of our twentieth century men and women beating with the same high enthusiasm, the same laudable endeavor as did the hearts of their brethren and sisters of those Ages of Faith? Are they not consumed with the same passions, the same ardent yearnings, the same aspirations for all that is good and noble and true? Have they not the same hopes and fears, and alas; the same temptations, and the same failings, too, that were common to their brethren and sisters of those much maligned Middle Ages, the Ages of Faith, the Ages of Religious Orders!

Not all can join a religious order, but to those who are called thereto I wish to say — do not resist the grace of that God who calls you to become his own bosom friend. Catholic parents, I warn you against discouraging the beginnings of religious vocations where you find them, and I urge you to work with your priests for the cultivation of this, the select garden of the Lord.



## St. Benedict



It is not my purpose to give a detailed biography of St. Benedict but to show that he was the "Vir Dei," the man of God, described in the Dialogues of St. Gregory, and that his life is a perfect exemplar which both religious and laity may safely follow. I shall not call attention here to those points of his life and character which will be treated in the course of the following discourses. In our next sermon we shall devote our attention to the ideals of St. Benedict on prayer, the father, charity, and the love of peace, work, poverty, and education. We shall now consider only a few of the salient points which come into the narrative of his life.

St. Benedict was born in the year of our Lord 480, of noble parents, in the district of Nursia, Italy. His parents provided for him as good an education as was then obtainable and as thorough as the nobility of that time enjoyed. He attended an advance course of studies, and at the time of his flight from the world he was probably engaged in the study of philosophy and law.

Those were times of depraved morals. Many of the students, especially at the places of higher education, fell into vice, and, forgetting God, led sinful lives. On account of this wickedness, corruption, and danger, which Benedict saw everywhere and possibly also on account of the temptations which he experienced himself, he determined to flee from the world, with its pleasures and allurements, to a place of mountain solitude, where he

might put on the habit of a monk and serve God in a perfect life.

Reflect for a moment upon the beautiful example which St. Benedict gave herein even to the youth of our day. He was of noble parentage, had riches and might have enjoyed them, was heir to the palace of the Anicii, might have married a patrician lady, might have acquired great wealth and enviable honors; — but no, he loved his God and the salvation of his soul better than all the world, and he fled from that which he judged for himself a danger, an occasion of sin, an obstacle to perfect service of his Divine Master. There are youths today, boys and girls, who have this same vocation to the religious state, but who do not follow this call of Divine grace because they love the world and its pleasures better than their God. The grace of God is as active today as it was in the time of Benedict of Nursia. There are youths today whom God would lead by his very hand as he led the noble Benedict, but who, from cowardly, low, selfish motives will not follow the call of heaven. Many a mother even, who surely should love nothing better than to make a saint of her child, will urge them to stay in the world when they speak of handing over to their God the youthful life he gave them. They shall enjoy life, they shall become prominent in society, they shall strive after riches, they shall marry, they may go to the ends of the world, but they shall not serve their God in religion. Whether the parents of St. Benedict objected to his leaving the world has not been recorded, but we know that he loved God more even than his parents, and he silently left them, following the call of God. There are youths today who might retain their baptismal innocence, might be happy, good, saintly, if they had but the courage of St. Benedict

to sever all ties that bind them, to bid adieu to the world and unite themselves as immediate followers of the Immaculate Lamb.

Look upon them, Holy Father St. Benedict, from the land above, from among the burning Seraphim, and awaken in their hearts a divine love that will make them truly seek God as thou didst seek him, and serve him as thou didst serve him.

There are, however, men and women, youths and adolescents, whose calling it is to remain in the world, but who would do well to frequently contemplate the example of this Roman youth. He was still a young man in the world when he took this decisive step which severed him from the occasion of sin. You too, man of the world, must avoid that occasion of sin. Be it ever so difficult you must tear yourself away from it. How often have you promised to do so in the tribunal of penance, but how poorly have you kept it. Whether she be the girl you love, or whether he be the young man you prize, whether it be the place you frequent, or the amusement you seek; — if it is a danger, an occasion of sin, you must tear yourself away from it as the youthful Benedict did or you will go down the stream to eternal destruction.

But let us follow our young man, Benedict, in his quest for a place of divine contemplation. After walking for some time among the mountainous and sylvan surroundings of Subjaco he was met by a monk, Romanus, who inquired of him whither he was going. Benedict told him of his country and his people, of the events of his life, of how and why he had determined so firmly upon leaving the world and serving God in solitude. He besought Romanus to help him fulfill his purpose, to clothe him with the monastic habit, and lead him to some unknown spot, where he could

lead an eremitical life. Romanus lead him to a solitary cave in the mountain rock. In this cave, surrounded by mountains, leaving in the east only a glimpse of heaven, and in the neighborhood a running stream which was a continuous reminder of the passing nature of our life, and the noise of whose waters was a continuous "memento homo" of the eternity of that life which awaits us after death, God prepared his servant Benedict for the task he had in mind for him. Here the youthful recluse lead a life of contemplation, dwelling upon God and the eternal truths. Here he read the sorrowful history of his times, and wept over the ruin of the social fabric. In this sacred grotto God set up the cradle of that great Order which was to bear the name of Benedict.

Here God replenished him with the spirit of all the just. Like a second St. John the Baptist God prepared him. Like a second Abraham, Benedict should become the father of a countless family. He should be like another Isaac in the beauty of his spouse, and in obedience to the trying commands of his father. Like another Joseph he should be in the purity of his life. Like another Moses in his meekness, and like a second Jacob by his spirit of prophecy, like Elias he should be miraculously provided with food.

The monk Romanus divided his own rations of food with Benedict, and let it into the cave by means of a basket to which a little bell was attached. St. Gregory relates that one day the evil spirit, angry at the charity of the one and the reflection of the other, threw a stone at the sonorous little messenger and broke it into pieces. This did not, however, prevent the saintly Romanus from supplying the needed food, though more sparingly and with greater difficulty.

On Easter Sunday, after Benedict had spent three years in his seclusion, God notified a certain priest, who had care of souls some four miles distant from the cave, to bring the holy recluse a portion of the Easter repast which he was preparing in his presbytery. Knowing neither Benedict nor the place where he stayed, the priest followed the direction indicated and found the man of God hidden in the cave. After partaking of the meal with Benedict, this charitable priest, thinking over the things he had heard and seen, commenced his journey home. He narrated them on his way, and when he arrived among his people he discoursed upon them for their edification. Soon these people flocked in crowds to the sacred grotto to see such a miracle of sanctity. No longer was there any one in the neighborhood who was ignorant of his name. They brought him food for the body and received in exchange "into their hearts from his lips the food of life." Thus did God proclaim the name of Benedict to bring him from this mountain cave and make of him the founder of Western Monasticism.

But, before he went forth to the ministry for which God had destined him, his virtue was put to a most severe test. A more severe temptation against chastity, than he had ever experienced before, assailed him. With the sign of the Cross and prayer he repelled the evil spirit. But the tempter returned and the temptation grew more violent still. Now Benedict, assisted by divine grace, cast off his clothes and threw himself into a thicket of briars and nettles. He rolled about a long time so that his whole body was, in consequence, covered with wounds. So well did he extinguish the fire of concupiscence that never afterwards did he experience the slightest temptation of the flesh.



Again we will interrupt our narrative for a short reflection upon the lesson this should teach us, and upon the encouragement we should receive from it.

Young man and young lady, I address these words to you. St. Benedict gave you an example—follow it. My experience with youth teaches me that there is not a young person living who desires to be wicked. They all have in their mind a high ideal which they would like to copy. But the blood courses quickly in their veins, they love to try everything new, they are so anxious to please and are so easily pleased. With the lightmindedness of youth they seek after pleasure. Father, mother, priest, in their opinion, look at the dark side of things. They demand entirely too much. Everything is innocent, there is danger in nothing, and before they are aware, temptation is upon them, the poisonous serpent has found his way into their heart. Because they were not on their guard in time they knew not how to resist.

Young people, most precious portion of our flock, take an example from Benedict, the Roman youth. The love and fear of God were ever in his heart. He prayed in time, he fled from the occasion, he denied himself legitimate pleasure, he thought of the end and the judgment, and then he hesitated not, when temptation came, to extinguish by violence the flame of concupiscence.

Beloved Father Benedict, again we turn to thee and pray: Teach thou these youthful ones, entrusted to our care, to keep down the flesh and subject it to the spirit. Teach them to love chastity and to contend for it as thou didst. Obtain for them a little of thy blessed spirit, that turning away from the world, they may think on the eternal years. Teach them to love that obedience of which thou didst speak so eloquently in thy



Holy Rule, that, lead by filial reverence, they may give an attentive ear to the admonitions of their parents and their priests.

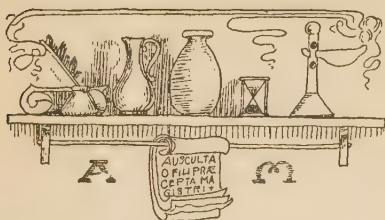
Now God found his servant ready to take the leadership over others, and a great many persons, who like himself had left the world, place themselves under his direction. With great reluctance he acquiesces to the petitions of the monks of Vicovaro and becomes their abbot. He does not stay with them long, however, because they did not belong to that class of monks who "truly seek God." After leaving them he undertook the direction of the monastery of Subjaco. For thirty-five years he was their abbot and endeared himself most heartily to the monks. Young and old came from near and far to receive from him the habit of religion. For the sake of that sweet "Peace," which has since become traditional in his Order, St. Benedict again left Subjaco, when a certain Florentinus, impelled by jealousy, strove to ruin his community. He took with him several monks and journeyed to the heights of Cassino, where he established the most noted monastery of his Order. Again we find him retiring to prepare himself by fasting and prayer. It was at Monte Cassino where he finally wrote his Rule. Here his twin sister Scholastica came to receive from him a copy of the Holy Rule and to establish under the shadow of Monte Cassino a convent for holy virgins. At Monte Cassino he distributed, during a famine, to the poor all the possessions of the monastery so that there remained only five loaves to feed the entire community. Here he healed the sick, and through his powerful intercession restored the dead to life, and made a fountain of water flow from the solid rock. Here it was that Benedict stood as an all-powerful moderator and inflexible judge between the victorious barbarian and the van-

quished Italian. Here he saw the whole world in a ray of light, and, as tradition has it, received from God the assurance that his Order would embrace the whole Christian universe and would continue till the end of time. It was at Monte Cassino that he saw the soul of the saintly bishop Germanus-carried by the angels up to heaven in a fiery globe. At Monte Cassino he appears as the typical Father of a Christian family — the Father Abbot of his Rule. He was with his monks in all their labors. He encouraged them, he directed them, he prayed for them and lived for them. If we consider his virtues we find nothing superior in the annals of the saints presented to our admiration by the Church. Love of God, and man, humility, the gift of prayer, dominion over the passions, form him into a masterpiece of the grace of the Holy Ghost. How could it be otherwise than that these early monks should live like angels of God.

In order to relate to you the manner of the death which St. Benedict died I shall not attempt to describe it in my own words, but beg leave to narrate it in the words of his biographer, St. Gregory, who says: "Several months before his departure from this life he foretold to his disciples the day on which he should die. Six days previous to his death, he ordered them to open the sepulchre wherein he wished to be buried. On the sixth day, he desired to be carried to the Church, and there having received the Eucharist, with his eyes raised in prayer towards heaven, and held up by his disciples, he breathed forth his soul. Two monks saw it ascending to heaven, adorned with a most precious robe and surrounded by shining lights. They also saw a most beautiful and venerable man, who stood above the saint's head, and they heard him speak thus: 'This is the way whereby Benedict

the beloved of the Lord, ascended to heaven.' ”

O holy Father, St. Benedict, who didst die a death so sublime, pray for us thy sons and pray for these thy people. Obtain for us a death courageous and brave as thine. Drive from us, at our last hour, the cruel enemy, visit us by thy presence, and leave us not, till we have breathed forth our soul into the bosom of God.





## The Order of St. Benedict an Ideal Christian Family



REFLECTED in our first discourse on Religious Life in general, we then made a meditation upon the life of St. Benedict, and we now are prepared to study Religious Life in the Benedictine Order. There are declarations from several popes to the effect that the Rule of St. Benedict is an inspired work, and that St. Benedict was an extraordinary instrument in the hands of Almighty God when he wrote this Holy Rule. In European countries it would be easy to find representative Catholic laymen who have in a prominent place on their desk a copy of this Holy Rule. It has found a place near the throne of kings, and on the shelves of lawyers, statesmen and jurists. Constitutions of nations have been built upon it. Even Protestants have, in no mistaken terms proclaimed its worth. The Church's liturgical prayer has to a great extent been formulated according to the ordinances laid down in the Holy Rule. One of the oldest pastoral theologies extant is based upon this Rule of St. Benedict. Surely this Holy Rule must be a priceless treasure. It is our purpose in this and in the two following discourses to analyse and study the power of the Rule of St. Benedict.

Throughout the entire Rule there is a wonderful discretion and moderation, an extreme reasonableness, and a keen insight into the capabilities as well as the weaknesses of human nature. Men

are to be drawn heavenward not forced. Works of penance and works of mercy go hand in hand. St. Benedict states very plainly that he wished "to enjoin nothing hard, nothing rigorous." His ideal was not to reform the world, but to restore it by the way of nature. At the time he wrote his Rule men pictured to themselves the Gospel precepts as one continuous practice of physical austerities, a hiding away from the world in a cave, a something applicable to but very few, a something hopeless to attain, a beautiful vision, a splendid theory, but alas, impossible to attain. In order to deliver the world from this sin of despair St. Benedict wrote his Rule. He took as a basis the natural family and built after that model the spiritual family. He inaugurated into this Rule no fanciful notions, no extremes of austerities, but he simply codified the Gospel precepts.

In making a study of the Benedictine Rule one cannot help but be impressed with the idea of family life which pervades it. The Benedictine has no general, no guardian, no provincial, but he has as a superior—a father abbot. The Order of St. Benedict is not an agglomeration of independent members, but one united family. It was this family spirit that gave the order vitality and strength throughout the centuries. It was this that made the members of that household work for their home, and build up their monastic surroundings into the paradises of the world.

Man is by nature a social being, and the family is the social unit. According to the ideal of St. Benedict the religious should leave all, and deny himself, but he should not put aside the noblest prerogative of his nature — his sociability. It was precisely for this reason that he added to the family begotten of the flesh, the family born of God by faith. In order to weld these bonds most

firmly a Benedictine makes the special vow of stability, whereby he binds himself by the force of a vow to his monastery for life.

As mutual love is the mainstay of family happiness, so also St. Benedict insists emphatically and repeatedly upon fraternal charity — that mutual love which the members of each community are to show toward each other. It was the wish of our holy founder that the charity of his sons should not show itself at home only. Charity of its nature is unselfish. Benedictine charity should extend to all with whom they come in contact. They should be especially charitable to the poor and infirm, remembering the words of the Saviour: "I was a stranger and you took me in," "I was naked and you covered me," "I was hungry and you gave me to eat." This spirit of charity has become so deeply rooted in the traditions of the order that Benedictine charity has become proverbial. No matter how poor their monasteries were at times, they always had a morsel for the poor. This work of charity, I daresay, has added greatly to make them so loved and so influential throughout the fourteen centuries of the order's existence.

St. Benedict wished every member of his Order to become a saint. For this reason he wrote for them his Holy Rule. Toward the attainment of this end the brethren should especially encourage one another in charity. In his prologue our holy father calls his Rule "a school of Divine service." St. Benedict wanted his followers to be useful members of Holy Church, in whatever sphere she might need them. They should be of service to every community in which they lived. He realized however that only a good man can be a thoroughly useful member of society, and for this reason he enjoined upon the members of his order the obligation of striving daily after their

own personal sanctification. In order to attain this object the more easily, he demands that they make the special vow of "Conversion of morals." By this vow a Benedictine obligates himself to strive daily to become a little better. St. Benedict wished to impress deeply the fact that a saint is not made in a day, nor a month, nor a year, aye, not in any specified period of time, but only in a lifetime. So he enjoins upon his monks the vow of striving every day of their whole life to conform more closely to their divine model Christ. Especially toward the fulfillment of this vow are the confreres to give mutual encouragement.

This too is the ultimate object and noblest ideal of every christian family. Surely the highest ambition of every father, who deserves that name, is that at the end of his life he may in truthfulness say to God: "Almighty Father, here are the ones whom thou didst entrust to me, behold, not one of them is lost." The salvation of the entire family is also the hope and prayer of every brother and sister in a christian home. It was this bond of charity in the family of St. Benedict, this loving one another, this helping one another, this encouraging one another toward striving after saintliness; this paternal solicitude on the part of the father abbot, providing for all, admonishing all and directing all; this it was that made the Benedictine order known in history as the order of gentlemen and saints.

It may happen in the very best of families that one of its members will for a time commence to walk the broad path that leads to ruin. This may also happen in the family of St. Benedict. Note the kind consideration of the loving father Benedict toward such unfortunate ones and the beautiful admonition he gives to the abbot relative to the care and attention he shall give them.



The father (abbot) is to pray for them, admonish them, direct them, and lead them with a rigor moderated by kindness and consideration for human weakness. Nor is the father to be alone in this work. All the family are to take the same interest. All are to pray for the stumbling brother, all are to admonish him in fraternal correction, and all shall strive to lead him by their own encouraging example to the way of righteousness. Brotherly correction in the intention of St. Benedict assumes rather the nature of brotherly encouragement. Can you measure the results for good which would accrue if this same spirit existed in every Catholic family of these United States? Truly it would be another land of saints.

In order that any family may be thoroughly happy it is necessary that every member of that family be willing to work. People of the world would do well to meditate upon the legislation St. Benedict made on this point. Though he did not require that all be employed in manual labor, he ordained that no one shall be excused from work unless the excuse be inability. He has the most severe reprimands for laziness. The different members of the community were employed in that work for which they were most talented. All were obliged to help support the family, by working in some capacity or other. From the very beginning the author of our Holy Rule made provision for agricultural labor, educational work, the copying of books and manuscripts, work in the field of missions, care of the aged poor and sick. Work was according to the ideal of St. Benedict not a disgrace, not a condition peculiar to slaves, as it was in those times generally considered, but the universal lot of man, an obligation imposed upon mankind by the Creator. A Benedictine works not merely to earn a livelihood, but also to



give a good example and to pay off a debt of penance. The grace of God finds no cooperation in the soul of an idler.

The Benedictine Order is not a mendicant order. St. Benedict engrafted even the vow of poverty into the family ideal. The Benedictine vow of poverty is comprised by his vow of obedience. The individual members are to call nothing their own, they are to acquire nothing for themselves, they are to dispose of nothing. Whatever they acquire belongs to the community. Their father abbot is to provide generously for all, after the manner of a prudent father who will provide wisely for the needs of his family. The intention of St. Benedict was not to impose something rigorous, but merely to make family life possible. For this end all must help to earn and save. Detailed regulation is given regarding the care which should be bestowed upon their books, materials, and library, their working tools, and their clothing. Cleanliness, decorum, special attention to the younger members of the community and to the infirm and aged — none of these are to be neglected but there is to be extravagance in nothing. If our modern families would pay at least a moderate amount of attention to these regulations of St. Benedict, there would be decidedly less of poverty and suffering, unhappiness and need.

Remembering the words of St. Paul that God alone can give the increase, and reminding his sons of the words of the Saviour, "Where two or three are united in my name there I am in the midst of them," St. Benedict enjoined upon his order the common prayer, or family prayer. Only the gravest reasons can excuse a son of St. Benedict from this community prayer. Here the father with his whole family assembled, sends one, united forceful prayer to heaven. This makes their life

complete. Here not only the individual, but the entire community is consecrated to God. This community prayer, where the liturgical offices of the Church are chanted, is the most sacred obligation of a Benedictine. All work, and solicitude of any kind, must be subjected to this. To the divine office, chanted in common, nothing is to be preferred. It is this family prayer that has drawn the blessings of heaven upon their work wherever they went, and that gave them power to convert the whole of Europe in so short a time.

I am sorry to say that this family prayer is sadly neglected in many of our families. I have heard only too many remarks that grandfather and grandmother used to insist so strongly upon it, but that it is no longer customary today. Catholic parents, I exhort you, insist upon it, with all the emphasis of parental authority, that your children must say their prayers in common with you. Perhaps that which you yourself cannot obtain from God, will be granted through the innocent prayers of your children. Young couple, just married, say your prayers together. Never will you be so much like that holy family of Nazareth as when you send your common prayer to your Father in heaven.

In his Holy Rule St. Benedict pays a great deal of attention to the father of his spiritual family — the abbot. Never was a more beautiful picture of a father drawn than that which our holy founder depicts in his Holy Rule. St. Benedict admonishes the father (abbot) in the most solemn words that God will demand from him an account of the spiritual life or death of his children. He gives minute directions as to how he is to take care of the members of his family. If they are diligent, he must be meek and kind and encouraging, if they are troublesome, he must be a stern

and prompt inflictor of punishment; but he must be kind and prudent through all, and attentive that the name of father shall not be a false title. He must be a master of deeds rather than of words. He must be ever present to his children, and must know at all times where they are. He is to make no distinction among them, but is to love all with the same solicitous, paternal care. His children are indeed bound by the strictest obedience, which however should be given readily as the result of filial reverence. The father is to be chaste, sober, merciful, shall hate sin and love his children. His life is to be an impersonation of that life after which his children are to strive.

No home is complete without a mother. The ideal mother is the queen of the home, the modest, retired, silent norm of life in every family. In the family of St. Benedict the Holy Rule takes the place of that mother. The father abbot is at the head of the community, but the Rule is the silent norm according to which he forms his own life and the life of his household. This he consults in the time of difficulty, when there is question of correction or punishment or praise. At times this Rule, like a prudent mother, remonstrates with him in the emphatic words of the Scripture, "it is not allowed." At times it tells him of the example he must give, and that God will on the day of reckoning demand from him the souls of his children. The Rule also admonishes the sons concerning their duties. It recalls to them the promises they have made, the perfection they have pledged themselves to strive after, the punishments which shall be inflicted for violations, and the reward which they may expect if they are faithful.

Can you imagine a grander picture of a christian mother? Home is the only place she knows. This is the sanctuary of her power. Here

she endears herself so intimately to her children and their father, that none of them can ever do wrong for fear that they will offend their mother. If they must leave home, the picture of that mother will never leave them. If any of them have, unfortunately, entered upon the slippery ways of sin, the remembrance of that mother will bring them back again to the ways she taught them to walk.

This is a brief outline of the underlying principles of the great Rule of St. Benedict. Truly it is the work of God. It portrays the christian ideal of family life most resplendently. The Holy Rule is old, yet ever young and vigorous as the Gospel precepts themselves. In its own traditional modesty it still exerts a benign influence as it did throughout the course of the centuries. Kind friends, members of a parish, whose care has been entrusted to the sons of St. Benedict, let me exhort you to meditate frequently upon these points of the Holy Rule. May the charity, the mutual love and corrections of St. Benedict produce miracles of sanctity in every family of the parish. May you and your children be guided by his love of work, and may his decrees on poverty become your ideals. Catholic parents, engraft deeply upon your minds the picture of a Christian father and mother as drawn by St. Benedict. Insist upon family prayer. It will open the reservoirs of God's graces, and will pour them down in floods upon you.

We cannot find a more fitting close to this sermon than the prayer of the Church's liturgy: "Raise up, O Lord, in thy Church, the Spirit wherewith our holy Father St. Benedict, Abbot, was animated; that, filled with the same, we may study to love what he loved, and to practice what he taught."



## Benedictine Ideals

### I

#### Distaste for Controversy and Cultivation of Liturgical Prayer



It is my intention in this and a following discourse to explain the methods employed by the Benedictines in their missionary and educational activities. An acquaintance with them will be of the greatest benefit to any Catholic.

The question has frequently been put to me: "How did those early Benedictine missionaries succeed in converting the whole of Europe in so astonishingly short a time?" My answer has invariably been the following: "The success of these sons of St. Benedict is primarily to be traced to this, that in all their associations they showed a predominant love for peace and a consequent distaste for controversy; and secondly, that they taught these people together with the dogmas of the faith also the liturgical prayer and the liturgical song of the Church." Their reason for doing so and the results accomplished through these methods I shall now explain at some length. Now we shall dwell upon how the Benedictine Order cultivated peace and liturgical prayer; and the subject of liturgical song we shall reserve for exclusive consideration later.

When St. Augustine and his confreres left Rome in order to undertake the christianization of England, Pope Gregory the first, himself a Benedictine, addressed to them these sentiments of the Holy Rule: "Go to these people and treat them with

kindness, not insulting them, not exciting them to anger, but meeting them with gentleness and moderation." The same words were addressed by a later Pope to St. Boniface and his companions, when they received their mission to convert the German people.

St. Benedict in his own life and in the chapters of his Rule admonishes against controversy, in the sense of acrimonious controversy, because, according to him, no good is attained through it. He inculcates an habitual love of peace. This spirit has become traditional in his order. It is characteristic of a Benedictine to love religious repose, to habitually show an innocent cheerfulness and classical refinement. This has made them objects of love. It has made them the champions of faith and justice, it has given them entrance into courts like prophets, it has enabled them to purify customs and to moderate unbridled powers. As a result of these peaceful tactics they drew penitent kings into the cloister and made saints of them.

When, moved by envy, a neighboring priest strove to ruin the work of St. Benedict, the Father of Western Monasticism did not argue with him, but calling together his monks departed, in order soon after to found the greatest Order of the Church. Had he argued with this man, he might have convicted him before any court, civil or ecclesiastical, but the sprout which he had just planted might have withered over his grave. No one speaks of his persecutor today, but the name of the angelic, placid, peace-loving St. Benedict will be praised until the end of time.

When a friend of mine, a layman, visited the cradle of the Benedictine order some years ago, he wrote me: "I have visited Monte Cassino and met the abbot. I sat on a sofa beside him for a long time, chatting about St. Benedict and his sons in

America. — The world may class him (the abbot) among the ranks of the nobility, they may speak of him as the favorite of kings, but he shall always live most vividly in my memory as an humble kindhearted man, and a 'father' abbot." He found in him the traditional Benedictine.

§. An habitual love of peace and a consequent antipathy for controversy create tenderness of heart and simplicity of manner. A rule which was so eminently reasonable in all its chapters, so averse to self-will, so insistent upon humility, so opposed to impatience and intemperance in every form could not but conduce to that true and placid rest ascribed to those who embrace it. The thought of personal honor or advantage, which might be attained through the noise of argument, should not enter the mind of a Benedictine. His one ambition should be to work for a common cause, how he can do good to others, how he can bring sunshine and happiness, and the knowledge of a loving sympathetic heart to those in need. The most severe reprimands and punishments have been inflicted upon such as entered into unbecoming controversy and betrayed these ideals of the order. St. Benedict appreciated the fact that no lasting, definite results for good are attained through arguing. It is the persevering, silent, humble, peace-loving manner that produces ripe and well-seasoned fruit. The course of nature is not violent but peaceful. Even in nature violence produces terrible results which it frequently takes years to remedy, if they can be remedied at all. It was this love of peace that made of the Benedictines the greatest benefactors of humanity, the preservers of education, the apostles of Europe.

As stated on a previous occasion, St. Benedict realized most keenly that unless God gives the increase, man labors in vain. For this reason he



introduced as the most essential daily work of his monks the sweet liturgy of common prayer, the psalmody, the official prayer of the Church, which he so beautifully calls the "Opus Dei," the work of God. Nothing is to be preferred to this. It is to have the precedence not only over every other kind of work, but even over every form of prayer. In the liturgical offices of the Church we have the prayer of God. Here man does not pray alone, but is joined by the angles of God, and by the great High Priest of the New Law, the Son of God himself. This is the prayer that was not produced by any powers of the human intellect but by the infinite wisdom of the eternal God.

At the same time when St. Benedict was building the typical monastery for his disciples on Monte Cassino, Cassiodorus was erecting his monastery on the Gulf of Squillace, where he undertook to subdue by the force of Roman wisdom the Goths whom arms could not conquer. Because the monasticism of Cassiodorus was made too much a matter of reasoning whereby to overcome the wickedness of the times, his foundation remained a young shoot which withered on his tomb; but that of Monte Cassino, which was built upon the liturgy of the Church, grew to be a mighty tree which, after St. Benedict died, covered with its branches the whole of Europe, and under its shade history began to write the genesis of Christian civilization. Behold the effect of our holy founder's legislation upon the "Opus Dei," the official, liturgical prayer of the Church. If only the world of today would learn this lesson well and observe it. Since the time of St. Benedict the world has indeed changed in a great many ways but human nature has remained the same. Argument and controversy are as ineffectual, as means of conversion, today as they were fourteen

hundred years ago. There is on foot today, more than at any previous time since the great separation occasioned in the sixteenth century, a move working for a unification of the various Christian Churches with the Holy See. This should result in bringing about a second epoch which in glories of Catholic achievement will surpass even the Middle Ages. I am certain that, if our Catholic clergy and people, were thoroughly animated with this spirit of St. Benedict the great day of unification would not be far distant.

5. No individual and no nation can be converted by educating the mind alone. The heart too must be cultivated to bring about thorough and lasting conversion, and perhaps the heart plays the greater part. Whatever appeals to the heart is readily accepted by the mind. Since it was the intention of St. Benedict to restore the world by the way of nature, he adopted this most natural means and insisted that while the mind was being educated the heart too should be cultivated, and that not through any private whims but by means of the liturgy of the Church. Nothing less than its God can satisfy the longings of the human heart. No one can ever fathom the depths of that heart as its Creator fathomed it. This God has inspired the prayers of His Church so perfectly that they satisfy every spiritual need and longing of the heart of man. The spirit of the psalms and canticles is sweet to every age and becoming to both sexes. These old men sing and forget their infirmities; young men sing them and commit no intemperance; youths sing them without danger to their innocence, and maidens without disparagement of their modesty. The father sings them and receives counsel, the mother sings them and is encouraged; from them sons and daughters learn filial reverence. From them the

sinner learns compunction of heart and is lead to repentance, and in the chanting of them he is made more pleasing to God. St. Benedict was indeed a wise preceptor when he made his sons apostles of the liturgy. This liturgy of the Church is a fountain of living water from which the faithful may take abundantly for the strengthening of their faith, for the increasing of their piety and for the vivifying of a thoroughly Catholic life. The Catholic liturgy is essentially a creative power to edify because it is under the immediate influence of that Holy Spirit whom the Church in her hymns invokes as the "Creator Spiritus," creative Spirit. It inspires because it is under the direction of the same Spirit who formed the world and built the dome of heaven.

We are discoursing in vain when we speak against the materialistic tendencies and the worldly, frivolous, amusement-seeking spirit of the age, if we do not cultivate the very hearts of our people to love the things of God. The Catholic liturgy is the greatest antidote against the spirit of the age, as it was against the spirit of the times in which St. Benedict lived. What the force of arms and Roman wisdom could not do, that was accomplished by the Father of Western Monasticism through his simple precept: "*Operi Dei nihil praeponatur*," let nothing be preferred to the work of God, the Divine Office, the liturgy, the inspired prayer of God. The liturgical prayer of the Church can heal and save the world again as it did in those days. What wonderful results would it produce among our people if they were imbued with its spirit, as were their brethren of the Ages of Faith.

In asserting so strongly the importance of the liturgical prayer of the Church I do not in the least wish to create the impression that all methods of private prayer should be suppressed. They

should be kept in their proper place. Private prayer should be inspired by the official prayer of the Church and should emanate from it. St. Benedict made special regulations concerning private prayer. The official prayer of the Church consists primarily in the psalms and canticles and the prayers of the breviary, missal and ritual. There have been a great many books of prayers published under different titles. Their object has been to edify the faithful, by suggesting to them prayers for hearing Mass, preparations for the reception of the Sacraments, prayers for the keeping of the feasts and special devotions. Generally they consisted of more or less commonplace considerations and acts, drawn up according to the manner of thought and sentiment peculiar to the author of each book. They had not sufficient influence to inspire with the spirit of prayer. They contained pious thoughts, but after all only human thoughts. They were the work of man, and as such poor substitutes for that which God had originally given. They were an outgrowth of that rationalistic spirit which looked with disdain upon all that was old and traditional. I am pleased to say, however, that of late years a different direction has again been taken. Prayer books have again been published which contain the prayers of the liturgy, notably the *Manual of Prayers*, the *Catholic's Manual*, and the *New Missal*.

Come then ye children of the Catholic Church and get that largeness of heart which will make you pray again the prayers of your Mother. Come and do your share to render that harmony which is so pleasing in the ear of God. It makes me sad to the very depth of my heart to find Catholics reciting at the functions of the liturgy, especially at Holy Mass and Vespers, prayers which do not in the least recall to their mind the sacred mysteries

which are being performed. There are Catholics who, on account of their inacquaintance with the prayers of the Church, have but a very faint idea of what the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Vespers and Benediction are, not to mention, that they have no knowledge whatsoever of the administration of the Sacraments, the funeral services, the prayers of the Church at marriages, baptisms, churchings and the various blessings. There is no need of speaking to them about the beauty of the Church because they have no understanding for it. Surely, when we consider these facts, we can understand why their prayers, in church and at home, proceed from their lips and not from their hearts, and why their attendance at the services is made up of one series of distractions. Come then, good people, and give your ready assistance to make known again among the laity the prayer of the Church, the prayer composed by God for man. If you cannot enjoy the privilege of assisting at the public recitation of these Divine Offices, as did your brethren of the ages past, do at least that which you can and recite with a loving heart these prayers of the Church in your own modest way. You will be better and happier Christians on account of it. You will love God more, and will practice His religion with greater pleasure and ease.

To get at least a faint image of the powerful influence of the liturgical prayers of the Church on the lives and minds of men, we need return but for a minute to the Ages of Faith. As a result of the staunch faith of these people the pillars of some of their churches were made of solid silver with ornaments of solid gold. If it is true that in these churches the very stone of the portals was worn with the kisses of the faithful, it is because there was in these churches an acquain-

tance with the Church's liturgy that made these people pray. If the corporal and spiritual works of mercy were better practiced then than now, it was because every fibre of their being was penetrated with a love and an enthusiasm for the Saviour and His teachings, as a result of their acquaintance with the Gospel prayer. Where have we such masterpieces of art, and architecture, of poetry and music as these Ages of Faith produced? These monuments and masterpieces of art are the outgrowth of the religion of those centuries. They are the living proofs that spirituality must dominate in art, and that Christian art must be saintly. They grew out of the liturgical prayer of the Church. In all their grandeur they were modest, and without effort they were grand, as the psalms and canticles are modest in their grandeur and grand without effort. They ceased with the Reformation.

The spirit of the psalms was the spirit of the Middle Ages. The entire breviary was recited not only in monastic churches and cathedrals, but in the modest parish church as well; and the laity chanted the psalms with the clergy and monks. Many a layman recited the entire breviary every day as faithfully as a religious. Kings reserved their stalls in the choirs of the monasteries.

The first sad revolution in the christian world began when the liturgical prayer of the Church was forgotten. When the Reformation came, it went about at the very outset to attack the very life of Christianity and put an end to man's liturgical praise of God. It strewed many countries with the ruins of monasteries. The monks, and virgins consecrated to God, were banished or put to death, and in the churches which were spared the Divine Offices were not permitted. The life and voice of prayer grew faint, faith was weakened,

rationalism developed fearfully and the Church lost a precious portion of her fold. What persecution and bloodshed could not accomplish, was done with ease when the people forgot the prayer of the Church.

But by the mercy of God we have not been consumed. There were left remnants of people who called to heaven in the sacred words of the Scripture: "Shut not, O Lord, the mouth of those who sing to Thee." The apostles of the liturgy were not exterminated as Satan had intended. The prayer which had been interrupted has been resumed. Numerous choirs of monks and virgins, though far less in number than in former times, have again left the world to spend themselves in the divine praises. May the day soon come when our venerable churches will again reecho those solemn formulae of prayer, which heresy has so long suppressed. May the golden days of the liturgy return, and may this Benedictine ideal again flourish in its bloom. May the day again appear when the Order of St. Benedict will count its monasteries by the thousands, in order that the praises of God may again be chanted as of old. May the faith and munificence of the faithful reproduce the prodigies of those past ages, which owed their greatness to the acknowledgement paid to the all-powerfulness of liturgical prayer.







## Benedictine Ideals

### II

#### The Liturgical Chant



OVE for plain chant has been declared characteristic of the Benedictine Order. This could not be otherwise since St. Benedict insisted so much upon the solemn performance of the liturgy according to the prescriptions of the Church of Rome. In this discourse we shall strive to analyse the reasons which induced the Catholic Church to adopt the Gregorian chant as its official music. We will then also understand why St. Benedict insisted upon it so urgently, and why his sons guarded it so zealously throughout the course of the centuries.

In all ages and among all nations music has been considered as a sacred thing and belonging to the worship of God. Pagan philosophers taught that man is lead to God, and his mind imbued with the divinity, by the sound of music and sacred song. They held that music seizes upon the soul with a magical power, and they regarded it as a source of civilization.

Plain chant melodies were originally taken from the Hebrew. The psalms of David were chanted to them in the temple. No one will doubt that God inspired the royal singer to compose these psalms. We know with what detail the Almighty prescribed for the Jewish people the manner in which they were to build the temple, and the ceremonial which was to be observed at their festivals. It would seem unreasonable that

God should have left them unaided in the composition of the melodies to which these psalms and sacred canticles were to be chanted.

Among the ancient philosophers we find mention of exactly the same tones which are used as the basis of the Catholic liturgical song. Even these heathen philosophers spoke of those tones as the music given by God to man. This music was prescribed for their school curricula because, as they said, these tones educated to chastity, whereas the other music, according to them, lead to frivolity, levity and unchastity. They did not consider a man well educated unless he had an acquaintance with these fundamental melodies of the chant. If my time were not so limited, I should be tempted to give some interesting details regarding the music of the ancients.

With them St. Augustine and the early Fathers, St. Thomas and the noble geniuses of the Middle Ages, agree regarding the divine origin of music. The Church understood the power and charm of music on the heart and cultivated it as a God-given art. St. Chrysostom says :“Nothing so exalts the mind and gives it, as it were, wings, so delivers it from the earth and loosens it from the bonds of the body, so inspires it with a love of wisdom and fills it with such disdain for the things of this life, as the melody and sweetness of holy song.”

Protestant musicians of note have said that these wonderful melodies should not be sung except on one's knees. One of them confessed that if he could lay claim to having composed but one plain chant preface he would cheerfully relinquish all claim to anything he had ever written. More than once has it been said that these melodies must have been written at the very gates of heaven. Those who experience nothing but ordinary sen-

sations when they hear this chant must be unfortunate beings. No one who has a heart can hear it without veneration and reverence. At their rendition no one is unmoved. By degrees the return of those monotonous melodies penetrates one and, as it were, impregnates the very soul. The oftener we hear them the better we love them. This song has made many conversions and has led many a sinner to trace his steps to the cloister and repentance. It engenders a love free from the taint of voluptuousness. It has been declared a faint echo of that primitive language in which man spoke to God in the state of innocence. The singing of it can in some manner revive the powers of sentiment and virtue, which the Creator placed into the heart of man.

The Benedictine apostles who converted the whole of Europe for the Spouse of Christ, taught these people together with the doctrines of the faith also the songs of the Church. A knowledge of them was considered almost as important as a knowledge of the catechism. Young and old, poor and rich, persons of both sexes, and of all conditions of life knew these compositions. The divine offices were chanted in the Gregorian monody not only in monastic churches and cathedrals but in the ordinary parish church as well. "These celestial melodies were as familiar to the desert as to the city; they were heard in the solemn depth of the forest, on the wildest mountain pass, and they were borne by the howling winds from rock to rock, along with the shriek of the sea-birds over the ocean wave," says Digby, the illustrious student convert. They were hummed by the peasant lad as he returned from the field and by the clerk at his desk. Children chanted these melodies on their return from school. The smith in his workshop, the statesman and jurist on their way to the

court room, the king in his palace and mendicant on his tours, all chanted the praises of God in these melodies of the Church. This was the spirit of the ages of faith, of purity of morals, and love of justice.

It is the desire of the Church that all the faithful should take an active part in her liturgy by chanting the common parts of the service. At High Mass the entire congregation should sing Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Benedictus, the Agnus Dei and the Responses. The Psalms and Magnificat at Vespers, as well as the Hymn at Benediction, should be chanted by all. A *schola* or trained choir, should sing the proper parts, which change with the feasts and seasons. This *schola* should support and lead the general choir, composed of the entire body of the faithful, but this latter should always form the basis and essential element. For this reason the Saviour taught us to pray, "Our Father," and not my Father, "give us," forgive us," "deliver us" and not, give me, forgive me, deliver me. For this reason again the Church directs her priests to sing "let us raise our hearts," "let us give thanks," "let us pray," and she bids them turn to the people and sing "the Lord be with you "and the entire congregation should respond, "and with thy spirit." Especially at the altar is the priest the ambassador of God. He prays and offers sacrifice not in his own name but in the name of the people. For this reason the people should take an active and not merely a passive part in the services. Besides fulfilling the desire of the Church, this method will rivet the attention of all to the services and will be the greatest help to banish distractions.

Gregorian monody is of its very nature intended to be executed by all the assistants. Polyphony is essentially egoistical and as such cannot

properly serve religion. Plain chant is the only form of music ever officially accepted by the Church. Harmonized Gregorian has been sanctioned. In the ninth century polyphony made its first modest appearances in the churches. From the fourteenth century the ancient traditions began to go down. In a great many churches the people had lost that intimate acquaintance with the liturgy and chant that characterized the previous centuries. They no longer took part in the chanting of the Divine offices. It is a fact worthy of deep consideration that at the beginning of the Reformation the secularization of Church Music was at its highest. Nor is it to be forgotten that these so-called reformers, in order to attract the people, introduced again the ancient folk song and selected their melodies not from any frivolous airs of the times, but from the old, generally forgotten melodies of the Church. In districts where the faithful still chanted the offices of the Church the Reformation gained no hold. The more we study history and its philosophy, the more do we understand the truth of these words: "Let me write the songs of a nation and I care not who makes its laws."

In order that he might bring about the great separation from the Church, satan crept into the paradise of man on earth, the house of God, and the liturgy of its altar. He took from the people their traditional chant, he made the liturgical services appear to them as an empty ceremonial, a something good enough for the ignorant classes of the past, but no longer in keeping with the general refinement and education of the present, and he gave them in its stead the great soprano, contralto and basso. Well might Christ have appeared as He did in the temple of old to remind the people that His house was a

house of prayer. The people ceased to unite themselves exteriorly with the prayers of the Church. They loved no more that which their fathers cherished as their best and strongest food. They became estranged from the supernatural tone of faith. Indifferentism grew with each succeeding generation and rationalism was the result. They rejected the unaffected symbolical chants of the Saviour and with them gradually the Saviour himself.

The powers of hell were not satisfied yet, however, but let out all their venom, blinding the minds of both clergy and people alike, so they would not perceive the real cause of the great defect. Even after Pope Pius the tenth made public his imperative decree on the reform of Church Music satan poisoned their minds so that a world of opposition was raised. The depth and far reaching importance of this decree has not yet been fathomed by any living mind. It has been said that the future of the Church and the world may be contained in plain chant. Who knows if not a complete regeneration of both may be brought about by music.

For a period of three hundred years we have argued with Protestantism. We have tried to bring the strayed sheep back to the fold by reasoning with them. Why not now apply the all-powerful liturgy of the Church? Why not apply that same means which was used with such eminent success by the early Benedictine missionaries? Put the songs of our Church into the mouth of our people and we will sing into their hearts a religious sentiment so deep that even the trials of those terrible days predicted in Scripture cannot root them out. The restoration of the liturgical chant will not only enhance the dignity of Divine worship, but it will also intensify the

spiritual life of the entire Christian community. As the Benedictine missionaries sanctified their own lives and the lives of their people, through the chanting of these Divine offices and then spread conversion over the whole of Europe, so our clergy and laity, becoming again impregnated with a thorough Catholic spirit, will convert the world.

In speaking so forcibly on plain chant and its introduction for congregational singing, I do not wish to cast any reflections upon our choirs, as though I were displeased with their work. Quite the contrary. These men and women have served our churches under greater personal sacrifices than any member of the parish realizes. They are entitled to grateful recognition from all. The work of choirs has been splendid in the past and shall be greater in the future. It is not to cease but is to be perfected. In the golden days of the liturgy the choir, commonly called *schola*, was most renowned. From them emanated the great composers and directors. Singular honors were conferred by the highest church authorities upon such as distinguished themselves through excellent services in their choir. The choir members will only then be in a position to devote themselves to the perfect rendition of the proper and more difficult parts of the liturgy when the people sing the common of the services. I am convinced that every member of the choir will give his most loyal support toward helping us realize this ideal of the Church.

No one will deny that the Church has the right to prescribe the music which shall be used at her services, as she alone can prescribe the words and regulate the ceremonies of her liturgy. It is a grievous sin to mutilate any of the words, of the missal for instance, or to disregard its rubrics. You know how wrong it is to scoff at any of her



ceremonies, to put them to ridicule or even to make light of them. The sacramentals of the Church may not be treated with levity, and why should the music of the Church not be classed among its sacramentals? How then can any one excuse himself from sin when he ridicules, disregards, and refuses to obey the Church's decrees on sacred music? St. Benedict, though favored with the gift of miracles and prophecy, did not consider himself superior to the Vicar of Christ, but insisted that the Divine offices should be chanted as the Church of Rome prescribes. Why then should we, his sons, and you, our spiritual children, owe the Pope less obedience? The song of the Church should be one great "*Sursum corda*," a raising of the hearts of the faithful to God. It must grow out of her liturgy. It must be free from mundane associations. It must be symbolical as its entire ceremonial is symbolical. Gregorian is the queen of Church Music. It is the Church praying in her most sublime, chaste, and measured melodies.

I have heard it said repeatedly that it is impossible to carry out in practice this decree of the Church. We had to hear this same objection when the decree on frequent Communion, and especially on the early Communion of children, was first promulgated. Even now we find districts where this same objection is raised after its possibility and unreckonable utility have been demonstrated a thousand times. Vain fear and every form of pretence kept some away. We have even met mothers who stubbornly remonstrated that we hand their little children this bread of life which should have been their greatest good. Today I am certain that members of every parish, and most certainly every mother, thanks God that the decree was enforced, and that we continue to insist so urgently upon it. The Church has never asked

the impossible. This decree on Church music can be enforced just as well. It will require some zeal, a great deal of hard work, and persevering patience. It cannot be done in a month or a year, but it requires years of cooperation between clergy and choir and people. But if these sons of St. Benedict could introduce this chant among an uneducated, uncivilized, barbarian people, without the aid of books or even of the musical staff, why should it not be possible today among an educated people and with all the conveniences of the age? We surely have no less of the God-like in us than thoe heathen converts had, because God breathed into us his same immaculate breath that he breathed into them. One thing is true, however, there is not present the ready obedience of the barbarian neophyte nor the zeal of those early missionaries. How can any one say that the introduction of congregational singing is impossible when no serious effort has been made to introduce it? We have introduced the singing of the liturgical Sunday Vespers and I am certain that all who attend are most highly edified. All of our children sing the common of High Mass, and I am pleased to say that it was not at all such a difficult task to teach them. Before long I hope that not only the entire body of children, but the entire congregation, will sing sacred songs in the vernacular at all Low Masses.

Now come, good people, let us all be good and obedient children of our Holy Mother Church. Let there be no opposition to the execution of this decree. If its realization will be prevented not only we, your priests, but also you, our people, will have to answer to God for it. If we work harmoniously there is no doubt we can see it realized. The Church has granted special indulgences on prayers for the restoration of Church


Music to its proper position, and I ask you all to assist us with your prayers so that the day may not be too far distant when the entire congregation will assist not only in the chanting of the Vespers at also in the common of the High Mass.

Again I conclude my appeal with the prayer of the Church on the feast of St. Benedict: "Raise up, O Lord, in thy Church, the Spirit wherewith our holy Father, St. Benedict, Abbot, was animated; that, filled with the same, we may study to love what he loved, and to practice what he taught."





## The Order of St. Benedict in History

T is now my privilege to speak upon the Order of St. Benedict in history. It is my intention to show, in a brief sketch, the results accomplished through the Christlike ideals and aims of our holy founder, as explained in previous discourses. I confess that I hesitated before deciding upon this subject, because I feared that my personal relation to the Benedictine Order might lay me open to the charge of vanity; but I concluded that it should be easy for me to lose myself in reciting the great achievements of the grand old Order, and I felt that you had a rightful claim to demand that, after speaking to you upon the aims and ideals of the Order I should also give you at least an outline of the important role it played in the history of the world. It will also give definite proof for what I said in my introductory sermon, that Benedictine ideals are a concrete model for the reformation, or rather perfect restoration of Christian society. A sketch of the history of the Benedictine Order should acquaint you better with the important part the Catholic Church is performing in the civilizing and educating of the world, because the Order of St. Benedict is only a part of that Church. It should make you love your Church still more as the chief civilizing influence in the world.

Remember that I am not attempting to narrate the history of the Order of St. Benedict, because it would take volumes upon volumes to do

so. Beginning with the sixth century I should have to recount the greater part of the history of the world. I wish merely to give you an outline of the important role played by the Benedictines in the civilizing, educating, christianizing of the world.

In order that we may be in a position to understand the importance of the Benedictine Order in history it will be necessary to call attention to the condition of the world at the time when St. Benedict founded his order.

Europe never had a more calamitous or desperate period in all its history than that which reached its climax at the time of the birth of St. Benedict. Confusion, corruption, despair, and death were everywhere. Authority, morals, laws, arts, sciences, religion herself, might have been supposed condemned to irremediable ruin. Germany was still entirely pagan, as was Great Britain and the countries of the North. France was invaded on the north by the pagan Franks, and on the south by the Arian Burgundians. Spain was at the mercy of the Arians and barbarians. In a word all those countries into which the first disciples of Jesus Christ carried the faith, had again fallen a prey to barbarism, and most frequently to a barbarism which the Arian heresy employed as an instrument of its hatred against the Church. The world had to be reconquered.

Amidst this universal darkness and desolation, history directs our gaze to the heights of Cassino in the center of Italy. A single, solitary, Benedict of Nursia, was about to form there a citadel of virtue, and to light it up with a splendor, destined to shine over regenerated Europe for ten centuries to come. Here were built his first monastery and his first monastic church. Here his first school of Divine service was established,

and the *Opus Dei* was chanted. From here his first missionaries were sent to the world. From here have issued legions of saints and monks, whose devotion won for the Church her greatest conquests and purest glories. From here issued the Rule and institution of St. Benedict, the flower of christian civilization, the permanent victory of the soul over the flesh, the intellectual enfranchisement of Europe. Here men were born who should become the masters of the world.

Clergy and laymen, Romans and Barbarians, victors and vanquished, rich and poor, young and old, alike flocked to St. Benedict to embrace his Rule. During the lifetime of St. Benedict, and after his death, the sons of the noblest races of Italy and the best of the converted barbarians came in multitudes to Monte Cassino. They came out again, and descended from it to spread themselves over all the West. Missionaries and husbandmen, who were soon to become the doctors and pontiffs, the artists and legislators, the historians and poets of the world, emanated from here. They went forth to spread peace and faith, light and life, freedom and charity, knowledge and art, the word of God and the genius of man, the Holy Scriptures and the great works of classical literature, amid the despairing provinces of the destroyed empire, and even into the barbarous countries from which destruction had come forth.

They went forth to be seen beside the throne with Charlemagne, Alfred, and Otto the Great, Several kings themselves were Benedictines, who left their monasteries, under holy obedience, to assume the reign of government. Others abdicated their thrones to exchange the royal colors for the humble black of St. Benedict. The sons of St. Benedict ascended the chair of St. Peter,

numbering more than a score of Popes, and they guided the ship of the Church during the most turbulent times. We see them bringing about the renowned "Truce of God," and helping to draw up the declarations of "Magna Charta."

Less than a century after the death of St. Benedict all that barbarism had won from civilization was reconquered, and still more, his children took in hand to carry the Gospel beyond those limits which had confined the first disciples of Christ. After Italy, France, and Spain had been retaken from the enemy, Great Britain, Germany, Scandinavia and the lands of the Slavs were in turn invaded, conquered, and incorporated into Christendom. Twenty barbarian tribes were successively transformed into Christian nations. The West was saved. A new Empire was formed. A new world began under the leadership of the sons of St. Benedict.

These Benedictines became the agriculturists of Europe. They were the best husbandmen and the only gardeners of Europe. Wherever they came they converted the wilderness into a beautiful garden and cultivated country. They labored with their own hands, drained morasses, and cleaned away forests. They found a swamp, a moor, a thicket, a rock, and they made an Eden in the wilderness. Their poetry was the poetry of hard, untiring work and hard fare, unselfish hearts and charitable hands. It is a historical fact that the fairest spots in Ireland and England have been made so by the monks of St. Benedict. By them the former wastes of Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Scandinavia were reclaimed and fertilized. It has repeatedly been stated that the Benedictines chose for their monasteries the most beautiful locations in Europe, but frequently it would be nearer the truth to say that through



hard work they changed the most desolate, barren places into Europe's paradises. What land is not full of their labors, what city does not contain some memorial of their activity, not representative of battles, but of the peaceful triumph, and charity of religious men. They made roads, plantations, drainages, but above all they made a happy people.

They prepared homes for thousands of families. Never was a suppliant, who came to them asking for shelter or hospitality, turned away. Poor, to the number of several thousand, were at times, especially during pestilences, sustained by the monastery for months. If we find no civil institutions for the care of the poor, nor any legislation regarding provision for them during those centuries, it was because the monks provided so plentifully for them. The rich vied with one another in making donations to the monasteries. Legacies were made in their favor. Whole tracts of land were given to them. These monasteries in turn provided for the poor. Never did Europe have so many poor, nor was there ever such suffering, as when the Reformation robbed these monasteries of their possessions.

This work of charity lead to the building of hospitals and to the study of medicine. Every monastery was obliged to maintain a hospital, not alone for its members, but for the public also. These Benedictines were the first to build city hospitals. Several of them, in larger centers, had accomodations for several thousand patients. We find that even at this date some of the larger hospitals are being built after the models of those old hospitals conducted by Benedictine monks and nuns. Nor is the trained nurse a product of recent years. Nursing was in those days considered a vocation. Congregations were founded in the Order whose special work was the care of the

sick. Modern hospitals would do well to study the regulations of those days in regard to the building and conducting of hospitals and the care of the sick. The medical and the surgical sciences have indeed progressed during the course of the centuries, and with them hospital administration in details, but Benedictine charity and hospitality have not been surpassed. They were as proverbial a thousand years ago as they are today.

The treatise on Benedictine Schools forms the grandest chapter in the history of christian nations. They were the preservers of education for Europe. They founded elementary schools and schools of higher education. As men of learning these Benedictines towered head and shoulder over their contemporaries. They were the world's best informed men, and their monasteries were Europe's centers of learning. Emperors and kings, and their sons and daughters, were educated by them. They were the preservers of literature and art, and the introducers of science. It would be impossible to tell how many poets of note wore the Benedictine cowl. Not a single one of the ancient classics would have come down to us were it not for the diligent sons of St. Benedict. St. Augustine and his confreres brought with them the first Homer into England. Raban Maur is commemorated as having first brought Greek literature to the Germans. The Benedictines formed the German into a written language. Benedictines received and encouraged Dante, the author of the Divine Comedy, when he stood alone and forsaken in the world. A Benedictine cheered Tasso, the imprisoned singer of the "Jerusalemme," and a Benedictine disciple of Galileo strengthened him in the consciousness of truth and the obedience of faith.

These Benedictines made telescopes, globes and the first reliable maps. They were the

builders of modern organs, and the inventors of the first fire engines. They studied shorthand, and introduced the use of the arabic numbers into Europe, and the foundations of mathematical studies were laid by them. They introduced the musical staff, and were the first composers of harmonized music. By them the glass was introduced into England, and they were the first to originate stained glass windows. They were the first bookbinders and the inventors and perfecters of clocks.

Benedictine libraries were the most extensive and for centuries the only libraries of Europe. They comprised books of religious and of secular character. These libraries were open to the general public and were in fact the public libraries of the time. Regulations regarding the care of books were very strict, but how could they be otherwise when every book was such a treasure. The world owes these Benedictines a particular debt of gratitude for having guarded these books with such zealous care. They rescued the sacred and profane history of Europe from the ravages of the barbarians. They were the chroniclers of European history.

Benedictine musicians taught the sons of the nobility. No musical compositions of the present day have rivalled the compositions of those monastic singers. They did not devote themselves to vocal music alone, but instrumental music was cultivated by them as well. Nor did they pay exclusive attention to Church music, but also secular music was fostered; though the two were always kept distinctly separate.

The art of painting acquired such fame at the hands of Benedictine artists, that kings called them to distant lands to ply their art. Their engravings and embroideries, their handicraft in

metal, gold and silver, and their decorations of choral books have come down to us as the most magnificent specimens of art ever produced. They were the sculptors, painters and the architects of Europe.

These Benedictine artists copied every word of the Sacred Scriptures in letters of gold. Tell me not that Catholics have no love for the Bible. Where did Protestantism ever devote half that attention to even a few pages of that Holy Book? The Order of St. Benedict has given to the Church 28 Popes, more than 200 cardinals, 1600 archbishops, 4000 bishops, and a host of more than 50,000 canonised saints.

But the days of the terrible Reformation came and laid cruel hands upon the family of St. Benedict, which should have been venerated in every city and hamlet of the continent. Their monasteries and churches, their schools and universities, their art galleries and libraries, their fields and gardens were plundered, robbed, confiscated, put to the flames. Even their hospitals, these veritable asylums of charity, were made objects of riots by the originators of a so-called Reformation. At one time Europe boasted of her thirty-seven thousand monasteries and at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were left only thirty abbeys with merely 400 monks, scattered over the entire world. Thirteen abbots and five hundred monks were killed in England alone, during the reigns of Henry the eighth and Elizabeth. England, that at one time numbered three hundred Benedictine monasteries in her domain, destroyed them all. Only one Benedictine remained in that entire land. After thirty seven years of imprisonment he invested through the doors of his prison cell two secular Priests who transplanted the traditions of the order, so it can be said that the Benedictine Order never died out in Great Britain since the day when St. Augustin established it there.

But God would not allow that the work of St. Benedict should be destroyed. It was to come forth from these persecutions, weakened indeed in numbers, but cleansed, purified in new strength to do the work of God, until the end of time. They have built on the old ruins again. Today there are about twenty five thousand members of that Order engaged in every line of work. They are again conducting schools, and universities hospitals and homes for the aged. Several of the crowned heads of Europe have again been educated by them. The schools of the entire Austrian Empire have, by the government, been modeled after the Benedictine methods. They are again patrons of the arts, of literature, architecture, music, painting. The reform of Church Music has been turned over to them, the revision of the Vulgate is in their hands, and they are publishing the official Bulletin of the Pope, the "*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*."

The Order has been transplanted to America where it is engaged in every line of work, charitable, educational, missionary. It was established about seventy years ago and already numbers eighteen abbeys with about 1400 members. The Benedictine Sisters were established a few years later and now numbers about 3000 members. As a practical illustration of Benedictine activity in this country I need but call attention to the work of our neighboring institutions. St. John's University and St. Benedict's Academy. Founded only sixty years ago, they are objects of admiration. They have made Stearns the most Catholic county in the union, and have founded and built up parishes and missions throughout this and the neighboring states. They have gone to distant Washington to found a monastery and college which already is prominent among the educational institutions of

the West. Its sons have been active in establishing a Catholic colony and monastery in Canada, and in memory of this sixtieth anniversary of its establishment, as a monastery, plans are being considered to erect another monastery in the northern part of the state. Benedictine missionaries of St. John's are doing God's work among the Indian missions of northern Minnesota, and among the Negro missions of the Bahama Islands. One of these Benedictine missionaries checked the Indian uprising some years ago, when government officials were powerless. Our Benedictine Sisters need no comment. Their many schools, academies, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, their convents at Duluth and Atchison, which were founded from St. Benedict's, are the concrete, living proof of their activity. St. John's is well following Benedictine traditions when it annually expends several thousand dollars in works of charity. The charity, modesty, humility and unselfish devotion of our Benedictine Sisters are deserving of imitation today as thoroughly as they were imitated during the years which in history are termed as Benedictine Ages.

O holy Father St. Benedict, from whom the whole of Europe drew the salutary waters of Catholic doctrine, pray for those countries and pray for us. With thy most powerful intercession, assist us, thy sons, and these thy people, that we may not labor in vain, but that we may again present a Catholic world before the throne of God.

"Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy Master, and incline the ear of thy heart, and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by the toil of obedience thou mayest return to Him from whom by the sloth of disobedience thou has gone away." (Prologue of Holy Rule).

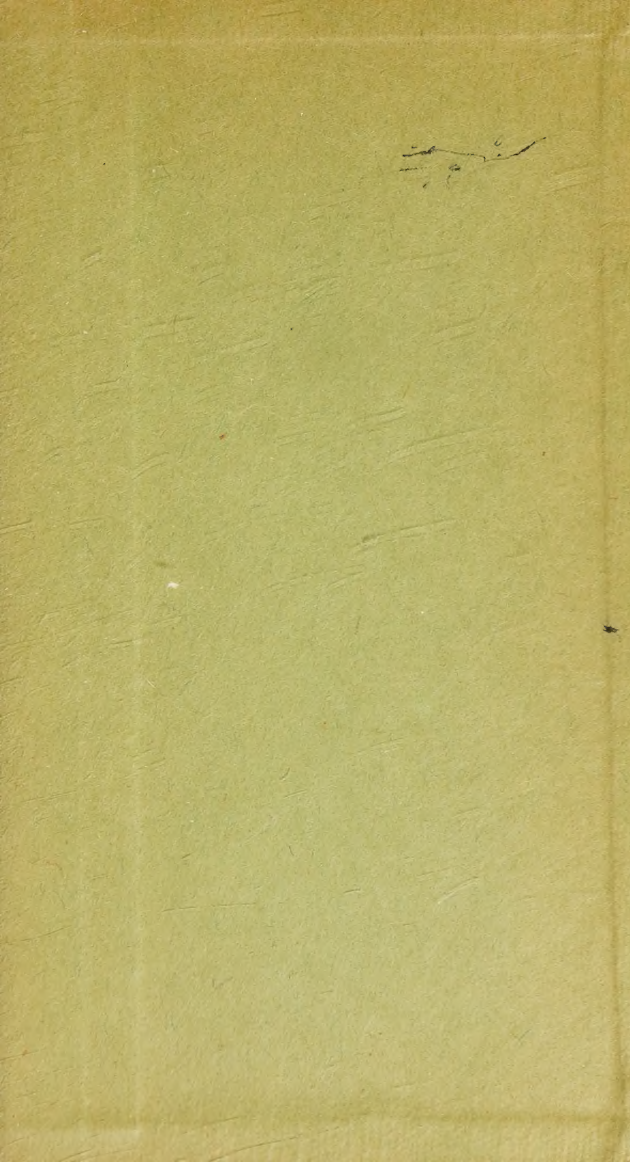












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